

The arts by Elaine Lau

Malaysian dreamscapes

THERE is nothing extraordinary about the subject matter that homegrown artist Voon Kim Cheong chooses to paint about — dancing figures, drummers performing, spinning tops, *wau* (kites) flying, sceneries of fishing villages, and so on. To be sure, many other Malaysian artists paint these things as well.

His genius, however, lies in the way he depicts these familiar images, which are masterfully executed and show his unique aesthetic vision. Marked by lyrical sweeps of movement and dynamic colouration, his artworks pulsate with life. There is sophistication to the way he has portrayed the abstracted forms and figures — they are very contemporary, yet possess a quality of classicism that is fascinating. There is a delicious dream-like quality to the works, and also an energy that renders them quite irresistible.

Voon's multi-pronged series of works are on view in his first solo exhibition, *Vibrancy*, at Artsense Creative starting tomorrow until Jan 25, and all but three are oil paintings.

Voon comments on being inspired by Malaysia's different cultural elements, such as the *wau* and *gasing*, and traditional dances and drums. "The attractive costumes and graceful movements of the performers inspire me, as do the exciting instruments played by performers," says the 42-year-old artist. "This has been a spark for me, igniting my creativity. [To me they] portray the spirit of unity: its joy, strength, courage, harmony and energy."

Voon graduated from the Saito Academy of Graphic Design in 1992 and sought further training in fine art. He makes a living in illustration, graphic design and painting. He has exhibited in group shows numerous times, such as at The Philip Morris Group of Malaysia Awards and other shows at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, various exhibitions organised by Klang Fine Art Centre, and at the First Malaysia World Art Tourism Expo 2006 at MITC Melaka. He took part in the International Art Exhibition 2007 as part of the Malaysia's 50th anniversary celebrations at the Daiichi Modern Art Gallery in Sungei Petani, Kedah.

In 2009, Voon had the took part in the World of Imagination (Vol 2), an exhibition in the APW Gallery, Long Island City, US. That same year he took part in the Malaysian Chinese Art Exhibition, celebrating the 35th anniversary of Malaysia/China ties, at the Cheng Ho Cultural Museum, Melaka. He also had his work exhibited in the Penang Art Society 56th Anniversary Art Exhibition in the Penang State Art Gallery, Penang. Last year he participated in the International Famous Artists' Paintings Exhibition at the Daiichi Modern Art Gallery in Sungei Petani.

PICTURES COURTESY OF VOON KIM CHEONG



The exhibition Vibrancy opens tomorrow and runs until Jan 25 at Artsense Creative, 19-1 Jalan PJU 1A/5A, Ara Damansara, PJ. Hours are 11.30am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday. Call (03) 8024 6382 for more information.

